A WHITE STREAK OF DISASTER

Visit to Office Develops the White Streak and Strange Chain of Dire Disaster Is Precipitated.

THE SYNOPSIS.

Copyright, 1907, by the Frank A. Munsey Co.) CHAPTER II (Continued).

A Streak of White.

"No; it's not. Just about the time we begin to feel positive that all is something usually happens." Grafton turned to him with an ex-pression of mock hopelessness.

"Jim, I'm afraid that something's wrong with you-you seem to have a sort of croaking fit on this evening." "Not at all, but-

"And the best way to dispel it will e to come along now and see the trimmest suite of offices in the whole establishment-my own. Just switch on the current, Parker, will you? I'll take Mr. Elsford up in the elevator. The watchman traveling noiselessi

in his felt-soled shoes, moved away to the rear of the lower corridor. switch snapped down, and he called "All right, sir."
"All right, Parker."

Grafton stepped into the elevator and pointed silently to the quietly decorated sides.

"Ever see anything neater, Jim?" I'll own up to it.' He shifted the controller, and the little car glided noiselessly up the long

There was not a jar, not a hitch. If all things in the Grafton building worked as perfectly as the lifts, her owner had just cause for pride.
"Second!" he announced playfully.

"Out sir?" "Thank you, no," laughed Elsford. "I'm going up to see the proprietor of

the building."
"Ninth floor, then. here!" Grafton broke in enthusiastically. "Just suppose, for the fun of the thing, that all the hoisting macidnery should give way at once."
"Thank you, I'm not particularly

anxious to.' Oh, you won't be killed-that's what I want to demonstrate. Now, here we are between the second and third floors. By throwing off this ciutch, i can release, practically, everything that holds us up. See? And having done that, this emerncy brake steps right in automatically and stops the descent within three feet at the outside. Hold your breath,

car, starting upward gently, dropped. aloud, and then shut his teeth togeth-With a loud snan the car had

topped hardly a yard below its orignal position "There!" laughed Grafton, as the

echo of the sound died away through the empty building. "That is the only case in which these cars make a sound. Come here and see how it Elsford bent over with him, and for

a minute or two Grafton pointed out this or that bit of mechanism and ex plained its manner of working. When he straightened up again the noved slowly toward the ninth story

The Streak of White.

Gently as ever it rose, past the third "Ever see anything to beat it for nechanism?" Grafton half turned to the other as the sixth floor ap-

proached.

"Never! It's- John!" The car, arrested by Grafton's sudden push, came to an abrupt standstill. Elsford, frowning slightly, looked at the owner of the building, and the owner of the building returned his

"Well, Jim?" "Well-what are we stopping for?" "For the same reason, I imagine, that caused your sudden exclamation a minute or so ago."

Then you saw it. too?' Grafton had turned to a survey of the wall before him, across the corrider of the sixth floor. He was studying it with some interest. "Well, I did fancy that something

caught my eye. Jim. And so did I-something mighty indefinite. What the dickens was it,

Grafton scratched his head. 'My only impression is that of a streak of something white, lingering for an instant on that wall and then disappearing as rapidly as it came.' 'Correct. It was there for just the

smallest fraction of a second and then it vanished." Yes, it was certainly a mighty short. visitation, Jim," muttered 'Grafton.

"It was-pshaw! I suppose it was imugination. "On both your part and mine, and at the same instant? That's hardly likely. That streak of white must have been a reflection from some of

the plated work in the car here.' Then why didn't one or the other of us see it on one of the lower floors, where has it gone now?"

Grafton leughed with some annoy ance. Elsford shrugged his shoulders. "I give it up, John. You'd better ingly.

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"I know, but there was something peculiar about that flash of white: something so-well, if it was a reflec-

Grafton allowed the car to drop bethe shaft, and then gently sent It

that some of the electric wires may I'm going to get off here and have

when he speke it was half in a grum-

"Your viserable enthusiasm about this place is unbalancing you, John. It's getting along to that time of night when respectable people crawl into bed. Get your investigation over He stepped out to the floor

want to know what that thing w If the wires should happen to

He opened one or two of the fuse boxes in the walls, glancing along the ine of plugs and sniffing for smoke. He closed them again and survey the electrollers suspended from the

celling. All was in perfect order, Grafton rubbed his chin. 'Nothing wrong there, apparently, been some kind of reflection, l

Grafton stepped back into the elevator and closed the sliding gate. With his hand on the lever, he paused or a mement, still staring thoughtfully at the patch of wall where the white streak had made its mysterious

Then he threw back his head and

of me not to have thought of it be-

"Why, that streak of white was nothing more than a letter going down the chute! We simply saw the flash of the envelope as it passed the glass 'A letter?' said Elsford wonder-

needn't become excited about it."

tion we shall see it again.' low the level of the big figure 6 in apward again. They passed the figure

point had been reached. But the streak of white had failed to appear. "Now, whatever that confounded thing may have been, it happened just The main thing I'm afraid of is

that once. Oh, don't go to sniffling, look about before we go up to the ninth. Coming?"

Elsford hesitated for a moment, and

"Well, I won't be more than a mig-ute or two," said Grafton, "but I do crossed, you know, or anything of that

Our white streak must, after all, have it was queer, just the same, and I don't like queer things to happen in the Grafton building."

'Well, by thunder!'

"Cot your explanation?"
"Yes! And how infernally stupid

as he settled in his own desk chair "That factory started up three or four

"By George, That's a Beauty!" Cried Elsford. "Um! I Should Say It Was!" He Repeated, Standing Over the Polished Sphere. go, and was going to fail

"But at this hour-within a few minutes of midnight?" Grafton frowned slightly.

"That part is odd, I'll admit," he said thoughtfully. "They don't work all night in this

remarkable town, do they?" "Not as a general rule, I believe, but it isn't inconceivable that some one or another of the stenographers may tave had an excess of work and been 'Maybe it isn't inconceivable, but it

obliged to stop overtime to unish it. seems mighty unlikely that any one would be digging away over a type-The owner of the building, however,

"Unlikely or not, we'll have to believe what seems to be the fact-o sume that letters are posting themselves this evening. Without a jar, the car ceased to

'Ninth!" he called cheerily. you shall see the executive den of the father of the town."

He led the way along the tiled way, switching on an incane lamp here and there, until at the of the corridor a curtained glass coor was reached. A jingling of keys. the door became a square of lnky

Grafton stepped in, and a moment later light blazed out from a dozen lamps in the center of his main office "Here's the outfit, Jim. How does it

"It's all right," said Elsford. "What's this-the first one of the

"No, sir-the center one of the suite another little dea of mine. Instead of stringing the rooms out, I've just bunched the six small ones with this big fellow in the center. Then, when we want to go from one office to another there is no great amount of valking to be done

"There's the bookkeeper's establishment; over there the stenographers try to drown one another's racket; that door hides Johnson's den, my outside man, you know; that office belongs to on, my right-hand men; there you may see my own private om, and so on around.

A Matter of Seven Million. 'It's a mighty convenient arrangement. Come in and try the kind of leather chair we make in Kenyon-

Elsfor'l followed into the private office as the lights were turned on. Grafton waved a hand at one of several big armchairs, and his companion dropped into it with a contented sigh. 'Easy, isn't it" Grafton laughed want of capital. I-er-bought it." "And you even control the chairs

of the place!" laughed Elsford. "Even the chairs. What do you think of the offices"

"Splendid. Commodious, luxurious, and cool, and all the rest. By the way, John, it seems cooler in here than else-"The ventilating system!" Grafton

announced. "We keep the air about as fresh here as it's possible to be obtained anywhere ' Elsford nodded rather absently. His

eyes were traveling with some astorishment from detail to detail of the complete office equipment—the tele-phones and the call bells, and the tiny white basin in the corner.

Grafton watched him with compla cent satisfaction. At the end, Elsford wagged his head sagely, and

"About as complete as mortal man could wish," he commented. with a sudden sniff, he added: "And a man with all this luxury. about him will still take to clgarette

"What's that?" asked Grafton. "I perceive you have succumbed to the allurements of the Turkish variety of the weed." "Not I, Jim. What put that Into

your head?" "Well, can't you smell it?" asked The odor of cigarettes? No."

"You can't?" The visitor's nose went up again. "Well, it may possibly be my imagination, but—"
"It is," said G afton. "I haven't come down to that as yet, and none of the clerks are permitted to smoke in here. However-" He dismissed the subject with some impatience. "Parker may have fallen from grace.

"Emphatically so!" "And you never noticed my safe!" exclaimed the enthusiast, pointing to the small, impregnable ball of steel, standing upon its massive pedestal in

Well, the establishment is satisfac-

the far corner. "By George, that's a beauty!" cried "Um! I should say it was!" he repeated, standing over the pollshed "And what is this particularly remarkable for, John? 'Oh, for several things. The price,

for one. I won't mention it, even between ourselves and at midnight.' He smiled thoughtfully as his fond eyes rested upon the expensive bit of Then it's remarkable on another account this evening, too.'

Yes, indeed. At the present moment that little ball holds all my



precious little papers, examined them carefully, and-here they are."

SUSPICIONS OF THE VISITING FRIEND

heaven in addition. They're safe enough. "You seem to have infinite faith in your own contrivances and possessions, John."

"Bound to have, old man." Elsford watched him for a time with a quiet smile.

"Do you knew," he said, "that pride goeth before a fall?" "I've heard something of the sort before, but it isn't pride in my caseor, at least, not empty pride. Every-thing I've done since I landed in Kenyonville, and everything I've made or bought or built, has been the very best existent at the time. A man is entitled

to be proud of that." "But still, too confounded much confidence is as bad as the little, you know. Just about the time we get to feeling so absolutely certain of this or

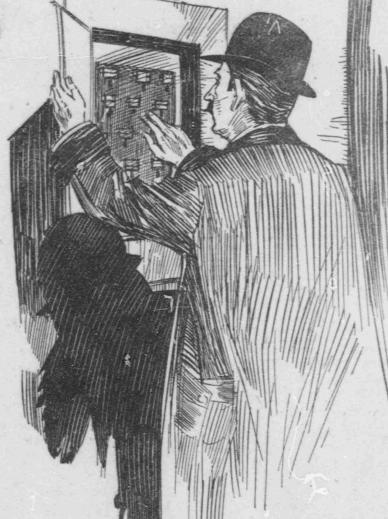
She falls down, eh? You may be Grafton tilted back and studied the

celling. "But with all your croaking," he added, "you just put in an appearance here at 12, noon, on the 21st day of this month-day after tomorrow, as I perceive that we are now past midnight-and I think you'll be convinced that all can go smoothly once in a

Was the Desk Open?

"What happens then?" "Colson's settlement with me on the traction deal."

"He'll be here, and Collins will be here," meditated Grafton, "and Everson, and Phillips, the president of the company as it is at present organized: Then we'll have a small army of notaries and commissioners of deeds and a few elerks as witnesses, I presumeand when it's all over, yours truly, John Grafton, will be in a position to



He Opened One or Two of the Fuse Boxes in the Walls, Glancing Along the Line of Plugs and Sniffiing for Smoke.

earthly treasures-to the amount of which his public spirit prompted him about seven million dollars."

CHAPTER III.

A Light in the Darkness. Elsford started violently, and for the mement stared hard at Grafton across

the little private office. "John! Seven million dollars!" 'Approximately that," smiled Graf-

"Oh, not exactly in cash, you know. The sum is represented in Col-'Oh, that loan on the trolley busi-

"The Kenyonville Traction dealprecisely."
"I see." Elsford took to considering the spherical safe once more, and something like a scowl appeared on

"Is it particularly advis-"I mean having papers of such immense value in your own office."

his brow.

'I imagine that it's all right. At rate, they haven't been here long, or the past year the whole bundle as been reposing quietly in the First automal safe deposit vaults."
"Which is where they belong now."
"But this morning," Grafton conto assume. And there, I think, his money-making career will stop for the "Well, I trust sincerely that all will go as you expect."

"And why on earth shouldn't it?"

demanded Grafton, with some impa-

"Well, I don't know any logical reason, but--' Elsford broke off with a laugh, and yawned. "Imagine that my croaking mood may be due to weariness, John. It was a good long trip, coming here today, and we've

been pretty busy since.' "And you're leaving early in the "My chair's booked on the six-fifteen

"Is it?" said Grafton. "Then it's high time you were getting some rest. We'll clear out of this." Elsford nodded, and the other, after

a glance about the trim little office, "Well, everything seems fit. Come

'You're learning caution from my croaking, I see."
"Eh? In what way?" Grafton's hand, resting upon the wall switch,

dropped to his side. You closed your desk," said Els-

AROUSED BY ODOR OF CIGARETTE. tinued. "I had an interview with Collins, my attorney, and he suggested that we look them over. Thereupon we went to the bank, obtained the Optimistic and Scouts Fears of Elsford.

little thing might well be guaranteed against all other powers of earth and That, at least, is a precautionary habit I usually observe when leaving,

You didn't this evening."

"But I assure you that I did."

"And I assure you that you did not.
When we entered this office your rolltop was wide open." Grafton stared for a moment, then a

smile came over his face. You seem to be keen for mysteries and unusual happenings this evening, Jim. But this one at least is going to fall through. As a rule, I'm the most methodical creature alive about office matters, but this evening, as I recall now, I did leave in a hurry. Your wire caame only a minute or two before six, you know, and I wanted to hurry back to the house and down again to meet you. I did leave that desk top up."

"But there was nothing of any earthly importance in it-and no one to sec

"Nevertheless, my boy, it demon-strates the fallibility even of yourself," laughted Elsford, with a little triumph in his voice. "Semething sim-Har might as well have happened to your precious safe over there."

'Shall I try the door?" said Grafton half mockingly, half wearily. "Honestly, I wish you would."

The other stepped across and rattled the little knob of the combination. When he stood erect he said dryly: "There! For your own nervous satisfaction, suppose you go over and twist it yourself! I'll make you a present of the contents if you can get at them.

Jim. you're in a mood tonight.' "It may be absurd from your point of view, but it impresses me as too almighty risky for a man to leave everything he possesses on earth-or papers which represent it-in one small safe, guarded by a single watchman. Sup-pose it should be cracked?"

"The papers would be useless to any one but Colson-for any appreciable amount. No crook would ever take the risk of trying to dispose of them. More than that, he couldn't get them, The Oder of Turkish Tobacco.

"Nevertheless, suppose he could? Your office building here would be sac-

rificed to the mortgagee for all you could do, wouldn't it?" "And your apartment houses about

"Yes." "And your business blocks?"

"And your home?"

'My dear fellow-"But they would, all the same. And your electric lighting stock is tied up

in the deal, isn't it?" "I deposited it as security-yes."

'Confound you, Jim! I- Well, yes, I did take out a mortgage on that, too, for twenty thousand, but-"And there you are!" exclaimed Els-"Your dwellings, your stores very roof that shelters you are every blessed one tied up in that small safe over there, waiting for the fellow who is clever enough to get them and put

said Grafton, and promptly held his tongue. Now it was possible that Elsford, a man not more than moderately successful, may have cherished a trace of unlovely but human envy of Grafton, the millionaire, and that he was made irritable thereby; or it is possible that his wrought up over the apparent insecur ity of papers which, obviously, Grafton might have guarded rather more carefully; or it is possible that both men were somewhat tired from an evening of dining and hurrying, of theater-

going and introductions. Be that as it may, something of discussion was growing up on the ninth floor of the Grafton building, and Grafton, perceiving it quite suddenly and feeling a trifle foolish that such a thing should have occurred at all, withheld the exasperated remark which irresistible fashion.

"We needn't fight about it," he laughed, "but don't lose any sleep over the matter, Jim. "I'll try not to," said Elsford more

'If thieves should break through and steel, and the whole seven milions should fly away together, we'll simply have to buckle down and make another seven. But they won't. Even assumpers. I can't think of a person who

The matter of the Colson notes was losed, and to seal it a little more securely. Grafton suddenly turned out the lights of his private office. ting lightly, the two men left the abode of business elegance and walked down the hall to the elevator. The car dropned to the ground floor, and they step-

"And there's the finishing touch," observed the proprietor, pointing to the watchman's clock at the rear. ker's making his hourly tour of the building now. Come over, and within thirty seconds we shall know where he

Together they stood before the printed dial. Perhaps quarter of a min-ute passed, then a clear, loud tick sounded within the clock, and a tiny hole appeared upon the printed sheet

The familiar apparatus in its latest form," observed Grafton. "At precisely seventeen minutes past twalva on the morning of May nineteen Par-

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